

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Michael S. Barr, of Michigan, to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the unexpired term of fourteen years from February 1, 2018, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN), and the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 66, nays 27, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 247 Ex.]

YEAS—66

Baldwin	Grassley	Portman
Barrasso	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Romney
Blunt	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Booker	Hirono	Rounds
Brown	Inhofe	Sanders
Cantwell	Kaine	Schatz
Capito	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Cardin	King	Shaheen
Carper	Klobuchar	Sinema
Casey	Lummis	Smith
Cassidy	Manchin	Stabenow
Collins	Markey	Tester
Coons	McConnell	Toomey
Cornyn	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warnock
Durbin	Murphy	Warren
Ernst	Murray	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Ossoff	Wicker
Gillibrand	Padilla	Wyden
Graham	Peters	Young

NAYS—27

Blackburn	Fischer	Marshall
Boozman	Hagerty	Paul
Braun	Hawley	Rubio
Burr	Hoeben	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Hyde-Smith	Shelby
Cramer	Johnson	Sullivan
Crapo	Kennedy	Thune
Cruz	Lankford	Tillis
Daines	Lee	Tuberville

NOT VOTING—7

Blumenthal	Moran	Schumer
Leahy	Risch	
Luján	Sasse	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The yeas are 66, the nays are 27.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Michael S. Barr, of Michigan, to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the unexpired term of fourteen years from February 1, 2018.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Virginia.

RECOGNIZING LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL GRADUATES

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend the Senator from Iowa for giving me a moment of personal privilege.

I also want to acknowledge our colleague who has been the Presiding Officer. I want to acknowledge our colleague who was presiding prior to you coming to the chair and acknowledge that it is her birthday today, a great day of celebration across Arizona and elsewhere.

Mr. President, I will only rise for a moment, and I appreciate my friend the senior Senator from Illinois being here for this. I want to acknowledge my youngest daughter, Eliza, and her fellow classmates from the London Business School—not LSE; the London Business School—where, last Wednesday, I attended their graduation. My hope is that every one of these young men and women who are going to be from across the world—the United States, the UK, Nigeria, Lebanon, Israel, India, Singapore, and a host of other countries—one, I wish them all well. I know they are going to contribute to economies and growth around the world.

I also believe that almost all of them now are going to go off their family's payroll at this moment in time after they have received this great, distinguished MBA they received from the London Business School.

I do appreciate, again, my friend the Senator from Iowa giving me the courtesy of this quick acknowledgement and recognition.

With that, I yield the floor and yield to my friend the senior Senator from Iowa.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Iowa.

WHISTLEBLOWERS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am back to the floor for reasons that my Senator friends are tired of hearing me talk about all the time, but I have come back to give you a specific example of retaliation against whistleblowers, Agencies of the government not answering letters that we have sent, and also what I believe is some political interference in some of my oversight work. Today, it deals specifically with the Department of Veterans Affairs—as we know it around here, the VA.

On April 2 of last year, 2021, I sent letters to the VA and the VA Office of Inspector General based on allegations from multiple whistleblowers. Those whistleblowers reported numerous ethical violations, retaliation, and possible leaking of market-sensitive information that may have affected retail investors. I have been waiting more than a year for a response to my inquiries.

Emails obtained through the Freedom of Information Act by a government watchdog group called Empower Oversight show that career public servants at the VA prepared a response to

my letter over a year ago, but when it came time for the Secretary of the VA, McDonough, to send that letter to my office, senior Biden political officials blocked it. It appears that Biden-appointed VA officials have issued an order not to respond to my request, and I have a pretty good reason why.

We know that the VA received these allegations from whistleblowers early on, and the VA ignored them. Whistleblowers alleged, among other things, conflicts of interest between a senior-level VA official and a company represented by her husband. This official, Charmain Bogue, has since left public service. The company that employed her husband, Barrett Bogue, is entitled “Veterans Education Success,” or VES.

On multiple occasions, starting in December of 2017, an employee at VA sought guidance from VA lawyers on whether Ms. Bogue should recuse herself on procurement-related matters. The lawyers affirmed that Ms. Bogue should recuse herself, and the employee even copied Ms. Bogue on that guidance of recusal. The employee also alerted VA leadership of Ms. Bogue's need to recuse herself. Ms. Bogue never recused herself, but the VA employee was reportedly removed from Federal service. Now, that is retaliation. That is unjustified. It should never happen.

In response to my letter about these and other allegations, the VA Office of Inspector General immediately opened an investigation. The VA Office of Inspector General uncovered more wrongdoing than originally thought, and I have four points that they uncovered. I am only going to go into those four.

Ms. Bogue participated in matters involving her husband's employer, contrary to ethics guidance. Ms. Bogue's interaction with that company violated the apparent conflict rules. Ms. Bogue did not provide sufficient detail to VA ethics about her spouse's business. No. 4, Ms. Bogue refused to cooperate fully in the OIG's investigation.

These are only some of the allegations that I have received.

The VA Office of Inspector General did not review the allegations of whistleblower reprisal; nor did it investigate whether VA employees mishandled nonpublic information.

I raised questions about all of these issues, and to date, I have had no substantive communication from Secretary McDonough about any of these questions I have raised. So what is the VA hiding? What else did the VA know or choose to ignore?

Congress needs answers not stonewalling. Independent government watchdogs and whistleblower advocates have called on the VA to review government grants and screen for companies and individuals who have engaged in wrongdoing. They have also urged the VA to consider whether those individuals or entities should be able to obtain government contracts in the future.